



Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

BULLETIN

Editor: Beth Heap bul.editor@tasfieldnats.org.au

Quarterly Bulletin

No 349

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The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People of any age and background are welcome as members.

For more information, visit website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>; email info@tasfieldnats.org.au; write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our secretary on (03) 6227 8638.

We welcome articles and interesting photos for the Bulletin. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email the editor with your article or photos by 15 March.

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Program

General Meetings start at **7:15pm** for 7:30pm on the first Thursday of the month and feature a guest speaker on natural history (no meetings or excursions in January). Meetings are held in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania.

Excursions are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 9:00am outside the Museum in Macquarie St, Hobart. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear. If you are planning to attend an outing, but have not been to the prior meeting, please confirm the details on the club website as late changes are sometimes made.

Sun 3 Feb	Excursion: Central Plateau Jewel Beetles. Meet outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery at 8:00am.
Thurs 7 Feb	Guest Speaker: Els Wakefield, <i>Working on Goose Island, the world's largest colony of Pacific gulls.</i>
Sat 9 Feb	Excursion: Woodvine Nature Reserve. Meet outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery at 9:00am or at the Woodvine Reserve at 10:00am. Drive to Forcett, after the shop on the left take the White Hills Road. Woodvine is at the end of this road. Park at the locked gate.
Thurs 7 Mar	President's address: Michael Driessen, <i>What's special about Tasmania's fauna.</i> Annual General Meeting will follow the president's address.
Sat 16 Mar	Excursion: Peter Murrell Reserve. Meet outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery on Macquarie Street, Hobart at 9:00am or at Peter Murrell Reserve at the car park near Penrhyn Pond (accessed via Huntingfield - turn-off at Mitre 10 "Fork in the Road") at 9:30am.

For details of talks and excursions beyond this date, please check the website at <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>

Subs due now

A reminder that 2013 subs were due on 1 January - please keep your treasurer happy by paying now!

Subs can be paid by cheque to the Club address, by Paypal (follow the links on our website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>) or by EFT to the Club account BSB 067 102 A/c 2800 0476.

Please identify your payment with your name and initial.

Family \$35 Single \$30 Single Junior or Concession \$25

Shearwaters at Clifton Beach 29 Sept 2012

Kevin Bonham



Waiting on the viewing platform. Photo: Els Wakefield

The weather for this extra club outing looked so bad that as the short-notice club leader for the trip I might have cancelled it had it been possible to do so! It wasn't, so we went anyway, and it was impressive to find that a total of 13 people, including our expert guide Caitlin Vertigan, made it out in the chilly winds.

Fortunately the rain stayed away for most of our walk up to the viewing platform. There was a wait to see whether the birds would come in or not (apparently not guaranteed in such weather) and during this time Caitlin gave us a brief talk about the birds and their habits. A few things that stuck with me were that a portion of the population stays more or less permanently out at sea, and that the eggs are very large for the size of the birds, and grow into massive chicks that at a certain stage easily outweigh their parents.

Half an hour or so of scanning the horizons while huddling on the platform in the incredible wind, and then suddenly there was a single fast-moving dark shape. Followed a few minutes later by another, and soon they were quite plentiful, swooping around us almost like bats, in some cases coming quite close, and attempting to judge their landings on the headland. Quite an experience to watch them flying around against the moonlight and well recommended (and to see them out on a night like that is to experience respect for what they have to endure!)

Excursion to Bangor Oct 2012

Janet Fenton

The Tasmanian Field Naturalist Club has had a long association with the Dunbabin family of farmers. Our Club's very first Easter camp, in April 1905, was held on the Dunbabin property at Marion Bay (then called Bream Creek Beach). Later, in Easter 1934 and 1948, the Club camped at Lagoon Bay (then called Wedge Bay) on Bangor. During our 2004 centenary Easter camp we were privileged to experience a day trip to Bangor, visiting Tasman monument. Details of the 1905, 1948 and 2004 trips make entertaining and informative reading in *The Tasmanian Naturalists* of those years.

Bangor is a beautiful family farm of 6,500 ha located on Forestier Peninsula. When manager Matt Dunbabin, was confronted with 38 eager field nats on our October field trip, he took it all in his stride. He shepherded us into the Bangor Landcare centre (converted from a wool shed) for an introduction to the property. The Dunbabin family has a strong interest in history, scientific research and study. Matt explained how the farm ethic is to conserve cultural and natural heritage in a carefully planned balance alongside a productive farming business. Tom and Cynthia Dunbabin (Matt's parents) have received prestigious national awards for excellence and achievement in natural resource management, and Bangor is currently a key site for Tasmanian devil research and management.



Field nats ready to explore Bangor. Photo: Beth Heap

Around the paddocks we noticed Richards pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*), yellow wattlebird (*Anthochaera paradoxa*), shining bronze cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*), forest raven (*Corvus tasmanicus*), welcome swallow (*Hirundo nigricans*) and masked lapwing (*Vanellus miles*). The farm road to Tasman Bay skirts Blackman Bay, where black swan (*Cygnus atratus*) were lazing in the shallows along with a single pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*). An enthusiastic gate gang (Sam, Chris and Ben) cheerfully waved the ten cars though every farm gate. At one of these gate stops, passengers in the first cars caught a wonderful close view of two wedge-tailed eagles (*Aquila audax*) being harassed by forest ravens.

We drove further on down a ridge where a tiger snake (*Notechis ater*) and an echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) were spotted before we reached the parking area. Here, field nats were soon on hands and knees, in the drain, photographing the first patch of bird orchids (*Chiloglottis trapeziformis*) and the tiny pink leaves of spreading stonewort (*Crassula decumbens*) which had a toe-hold on the dirt road.

We climbed up a dry mudstone ridge dominated by stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) and silver peppermint (*Eucalyptus tenuiramis*), where orchids such as dusky fingers (*Caladenia fuscata*) and mayfly (*Aciyanthus caudatus*), were in flower and sun-orchids were also abundant but not yet flowering. Native violet (*Viola hederacea*) was also growing in profusion. The flowers of prostrate pea (*Pultenaea pedunculata*) patched the hillside with bright orange, often with flower heads of dusky fingers (*Caladenia fuscata*) protruding through it.

After traversing the ridge for a short distance we headed downhill to Tasman Bay, noticing a cluster of hairy yellow caterpillars on a piece of bark at the foot of a stringybark. Robyn recognised them as being similar to caterpillars that she has encountered in NSW which eat decaying leaves and lichen. A picture was sent to Dr Peter McQuillan at the University of Tasmania. He identified them as belonging to the genus *Epicoma* sp. (Family Thaumetopoeidae). He thought they could possibly be *Epicoma melanosticta* which feed on *Eucalyptus* and some other Myrtaceae. The larvae are gregarious and have irritating hairs.



Epicoma sp. Photo: Robyn Gates

We settled on the waterworn rocks of the steep shingly foreshore in Tasman Bay for lunch, where the boys found a purple mottled shore crab (*Cyclograpus granulosus*) among the rocks at the water's edge. The Tasman monument was bedecked with the Tasmanian tree snail (*Bothriembryon tasmanicus*) with handsome striped shells, hiding in crevices and pits in the concrete obelisk, and probably partaking of the calcium 'mineral-lick' kindly provided by the Royal Society of Tasmania 89 years ago.

The monument commemorates the Dutch expedition's landing in this vicinity in 1642. More detail is given about their landing in our 2004 trip report:

http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/TasNaturalist/Articles/2004/TasNat_2004_No126_pp35-54

The goal of the Dutch East India Company was to discover a route across the Pacific to South America, investigating the Unknown South Land on the way, with a focus on mineral wealth and trade opportunities. The Dutch were not engaged on a scientific expedition. Tasman's journal, though lacking in scientific detail, does provide some notes on the vegetation in the area, demonstrating that marked changes have occurred over the intervening 370 years.

The party reported that 'the land is pretty generally covered with trees, standing so far apart that they allow a passage everywhere, and a look-out to a great distance...unhindered by dense shrubbery or underwood...' They also mentioned the great size of some of the trees, measuring 'from 60 to 65 feet from the ground to the lowermost branches', and that they had seen 'two trees about 2 or 2½ fathoms in thickness'. Today, the woodland association here of blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and silver peppermint consists of much smaller trees, and the understorey of prickly moses (*Acacia verticillata*), banksia (*Banksia marginata*), teatree (*Leptospermum* sp.), coast beardheath (*Leucopogon parviflorus*), sheoak (*Allocasuarina* sp.) and native cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiforme*) certainly prevents a 'look-out to a great distance'. Tasman's party made use of the local greens, thus being the first white explorers to collect plant material (albeit for culinary purposes).



Field nats in action. Photo: Amanda Thomson

We headed south east just inland of the rocky foreshore, walking on grass and herbage well-cropped by rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Bennetts wallabies (*Macropus rufogriseus*), pademelons (*Thylogale billardierii*) and wombats (*Vombatus ursinus*). Some small shrubs such as the coast beardheath were well pruned at browsers' chin level. One Bennetts wallaby was sighted and a couple of field nats had a close encounter with a

wombat. Tasman's party, who collected samples of animals' excrements they assumed were 'voided by quadrupeds', may well have been mystified by cubical wombat droppings.



View from Monument Point. Photo: Amanda Thomson

The unexpected sunshine brought out pygmy grasshoppers (Family Tetrigidae), yellow-winged locust nymphs (*Gastrimargus musicus*) and the brightly coloured southern pyrgomorphs (*Monistria concinna*) which were caught and identified by the Driessen grasshopper team. A number of southern pyrgomorphs were sheltering or feeding in prickly moses (*Acacia verticillata*). Hobart brown butterflies (*Argynnina hobartia*) were plentiful. The skipper butterflies Kevin photographed not far north of Two Mile Beach were apparently the Tasmanian skipper (*Pasma tasmanicus*). This species normally has two spots on the wings but Kevin's had three spots. Kevin also found a juvenile velvet worm (*Ooperipatellus* sp.) at Tasman Bay, and made some exciting snail finds including a completely new species of snail he found at the top of the wet gully near the carpark. In the open areas, tiny ground hugging plants such as dwarf sundew (*Drosera pygmaea*) and mitrewort (*Phyllangium divergens*) were common and we also admired a maroon hood orchid (*Pterostylis pedunculata*).



Southern pyrgomorph (*Monistria concinna*).
Photo: Kristi Ellingsen

We crossed a small soak, and then headed down to the inviting sands of Two Mile Beach. Robyn Gates was the only one who braved a (quick) dip! We watched a pair of pied oyster catchers (*Haematopus longirostris*) pace the

sand, and white-bellied sea eagles (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) soar over Cape Frederick Hendrick. Some of the party walked down the beach and explored over the boobyalla-clad sand dunes to the northern end of the shallow Top Lagoon. Here Margaret and Peter had a great view of a sea eagle catching a fish near the disused duck-hide. The lagoon was a tranquil sight, with black swan, some with cygnets at heel.



Lagoon behind Two Mile Beach.

Photo: Michael Driessen

Animal footprints abounded among the dunes and around the lagoon, including fresh prints that looked a likely fit for the sea-eagle, as well as water-rat (*Hydromys chrysogaster*), wombat, wallaby and brush-tailed possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) prints. High and dry on the beach a very dead seal and dead sea-eagle were found.

We headed back to the cars via a more direct route, meeting up with Simon, who had made a longer excursion and collected 91 species of shells.

The observation of the day must be Simon's sighting of two to four spotted quail-thrush (*Cinclosoma punctatum*), seen and heard calling from the forest floor near the ridge-top just east of Little Chinaman Bay. They were emitting a high-pitched shrill whistle. Interestingly, a past record from that 10 km square was made by the TFNC on Easter Sunday 1948. These birds are described as uncommon, wary and elusive, so well done Simon.

Mark Wapstra was hoping to locate a plant recorded during the 1948 TFNC camp. The record is for sea bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*) (then called *Convolvulus*), which has kidney shaped leaves and a trailing habit. None were noticed on this trip - more time needed for a more extensive search.

The Club really appreciates the opportunity to explore this remarkable property and we extend our thanks to Matt and Vanessa Dunbabin. It is encouraging to see a family practicing excellent environmental management on their farm.

A more detailed report will be placed on the website <http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/>

Light Trapping for Moths Nov 2012

Robyn Gates

To take advantage of good moth flying weather we had an evening excursion on Monday the 5th November. A large group of field nats (26) met Peter McQuillan in the car park at Cape Deslacs near Pipeclay Lagoon at 7:00pm. As soon as we started along the track we found plants and insects of interest. Yellow and black tiger orchids stood tall amongst the sedges and flowering plants behind the sand dunes.



Tiger orchid (*Diuris sulphurea*). Photo: Robyn Gates

Kristi found a wolf spider hiding under ground-cover and with her amazing camera we could see the spider was carrying babies on her back, their long legs criss-crossing each other.



Wolf spider with babies. Photo: Kristi Elligsen

There were spider holes in the sand along on the path and a daisy-bush in full flower. Children sweeping butterfly nets led the way while others in the group pondered over tiny flowers. We scouted around in the fading light and found a spider eating a grasshopper, a twig-mimicking katydid and a large looper.

Peter set up his mercury vapour lamp on a tripod and Honda ex7 generator. He spread a white sheet over a rope stretched tree to tree across the track. As darkness fell, moths, attracted to the light, rested on the sheet and on us.



Grasshopper caught by spider. Photo: Kristi Elligsen



Looking for moths. Photo: Robyn Gates

Our youngest members, Helena, Theo, Tilly, Tili and Morgan were a great help and quick to snap up even the tiniest moths in the yellow-capped specimen jars Peter provided. The wind was stronger than expected but the moths, mosquitoes, assassin bugs, parasitic wasps, beetles and tiny flies came in a steady stream and kept us all jumping to find another jar and take more photos. We all shared moth stories and Peter identified many of the ones we trapped. Gradually as the evening wore on people returned to their cars and headed home with the last ones leaving about 10:00pm.



Black geometrid (*Melanodes anthracitaria*).
Photo: Kristi Elligsen

Thanks go to Peter McQuillan for an excellent field excursion.

Note from the president – thanks to everyone for coping with the late change of day and location for the excursion. Apologies to those who could have come on the Saturday night but could not come on the Monday night.

MOTHS

Geometridae (Looper Moths)

Cyneoterpna wilsoni, *Crypsiphona ocultaria*, *Crypsiphona ocultaria*, *Sterictopsis* sp., *Melanodes anthracitaria*, *Melanodes anthracitaria*, *Hypobapta percomptaria*, *Hypobapta percomptaria*, *Hypobapta percomptaria*, *Gastrinodes bitaeniaria*

Noctuidae (Owlet Moths)

Euplexia nigerimma, *Euplexia nigerimma*, *Ectopatria* sp., *Agrotis porphyricollis*, *Agrotis infusa*, *Persectania*

ewingii, *Praxis porphyretica*, *Praxis porphyretica*, *Praxis edwardsii*, *Pantydia sparsa*, *Pantydia sparsa*

Lasiocampidae (Eggars, snout moths or lappet moths)
Pararguda rufescens, *Pararguda rufescens*, *Pararguda rufescens*

Anthelidae (Lappet Moths)

Anthela acuta

GRASSHOPPERS

Matchstick grasshopper *Vandiemenella viatica*

Variable cirphula *Cirphula pyrrhocnemis*

Twig-mimicking katydid *Zaprochilus australis*

Tasmanian grasshopper *Tasmaniacris tasmaniensis*

Christmas Get-together at Trial Bay Dec 2012

Erika Shankley

When I was a resident of Kettering in the '90s one of the common complaints was that, despite living in the country, there were few places, off road, where we could walk. All that has now changed, thanks to the dedication of volunteers who have worked to reclaim old tracks and develop new ones. Some of these are featured in *Kingborough Tracks*, a publication available from the Council offices in Kingston.



Ready for the walk to Kettering. Photo: Beth Heap

Twenty-one Field Nats gathered for a group photo at the picnic ground at Trial Bay. Setting off, we followed a footpad which skirted a boundary fence and meandered through dry sclerophyll forest in the coastal reserve.

Dotted here and there were remnants of spring flowers and there were numerous stops for photographs.

As we neared Kettering Point the dominant eucalypts gave way to she-oaks and native cherries. Here the track descended, via a set of wooden steps, to the rocky foreshore. It was low tide and a crowd of jagged white

Pacific Oysters clung to the exposed rocks while in small tidal pools there were various seaweeds and other molluscs. Intriguing was one long-defunct sea-urchin whose spines were still moving!



Sampling the native cherries. Photo: Beth Heap



Sea urchin with moving spines. Photo: Beth Heap

A wooden seat, installed by the Kettering Walkers in 2011, allowed some of us to rest our legs while taking in the sweeping views. Little Oyster Cove was crammed

with boats of all shapes and sizes - on moorings and around the shore-line at jetties and marinas. In contrast, the wind-flecked waters of D'Entrecasteaux Channel stretched far into the distance.

A description by explorer, Admiral Bruni D'Entrecasteaux, came to mind. On 18 May 1792 he wrote "Each ray of light displayed fresh beauties; on all sides, bays of great depth were to be seen, all equally sheltered from the winds ... None of our navigators had ever seen so vast and safe an anchorage."¹ He was describing the channel which now bears his name.

From Kettering Point the track, recently regraded, continued to the end of Ferry Road not far from the ferry terminal.²



Gum-leaf skeletoniser (*Uraba lugens*). Photo: Abbey Throssell



Qug examining some Pimelia. Photo: Erika Shankley

¹ Erika Johnson, Cruising Yacht Club of Tasmania Inc, 21 Years, 1975-1996

² This section of track was originally funded by a grant from the Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania (SCAT). Once choked with blackberries and other weeds, it is thanks to volunteers from Kettering Coastcare/Landcare that this area remains free of weeds. A recent grant from the Kingborough Council has enabled volunteers from the Kettering Community Association to upgrade this section of the track. Thanks to this community spirit, the Kingborough Council has been persuaded to lease the coastal reserve and to continue to upgrade the track right through to Trial Bay.

The Cumulus clouds, lurking above, finally disgorged their moisture in a patter of raindrops. However, this didn't dampen our enthusiasm as we made our way back to Trial Bay. Here we were joined by a number of other members and friends. Over lunch we continued our observations or maybe just gazed into the distance, watching the brief showers of rain sweeping across D'Entrecasteaux Channel towards Bruny Island. Low-lying Green Island, in mid-Channel, became a subject of discussion. This island was named *Île Verte* by Bruni D'Entrecasteaux in 1792 and later, Pelican Island by British explorer Captain John Hayes. On a visit to Tasmania in 1911, Frenchman, Alphonse, Comte de Fleurieu, lamented the fact that, though it had reverted to the original name, it had been anglicised.³

I had noticed potato plants amongst the native sedge on a visit in the early 70s and a later visitor commented on the infestation of thistles. Green Island is now a nature reserve, with Pacific gull, Little Penguin, Silver gull, Kelp gull, Sooty Oyster catcher and Caspian tern nesting there during the breeding season.⁴



Exploring the point at Kettering. Photo: Erika Shankley



Drosera Bug (*Setocoris* sp.) Photo: Kristi Elligsen

³ *The Mercury*, 19 August 1911

⁴ Nigel Brothers, Tasmania's Offshore Islands, TMAG, 2001

The list of flora and fauna seen during our walk is certainly extensive, but by no means complete.

Flora

Euphrasia, Pultenaea daphnooides, Bursaria spinosa, Bedfordia salicina, Leptospermum scoparium, Lomatia tinctoria, Pimelia nivea, Pimelia humilis, Dinella revolute, Goodenia ovata, native gorse, Leucopogon collinus, Allocasuarina ssp., necklace fern, Exocarpos cupressiformis, Comesperma volubile, Goodenia lantata, Drosera sp, Lomandra longifolia, Arthropodium ssp., Olearia ssp.

A couple of orchids, in the last stages of flowering, were also seen.

Fungi

Bracket fungus, *Amanita ssp.*, Coral lichen

Birds

Yellow Wattle Bird, New Holland Honeyeater, Black headed honeyeater, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin, Grey Fantail, Thornbill, European Goldfinch, Blue Wren, Dusky Wood Swallow, Welcome Swallow, Forest Raven, Silver Gull, Kelp Gull, Cormorant, Pied Oyster Catcher

Marine life

Pacific Oysters, Sea Urchin, Elephant fish head



Enjoying lunch at Trial Bay. Photo: Beth Heap



Enjoying lunch at Trial Bay. Photo: Beth Heap



The Christmas BBQ. Photo: Beth Heap



Relaxing at Trial Bay. Photo: Beth Heap

Wildflower Walks at Vale of Belvoir

2-3 February 2013

Guided walks are being conducted from 11:00am on the Saturday, on the hour until 3:00pm, leaving from a base with marquee beside the Cradle Mountain Link Road, 3 km west of the Cradle Mountain turnoff. The walks will take 2-3 hours, and will include visits to the Charleston hut and Daisy Hill, where the best of the flowers is to be seen. Families are welcome, and there will be scope for people to do their own exploring. Maps and information will be available.

Further information can be found at <http://www.tasland.org.au/newsletters/vale-of-belvoir-wildflower-day>

Annual general meeting

Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc. – GPO Box 68, Hobart, Tas. 7001

Annual General Meeting and Election of Office Bearers

The 2013 AGM will be on Thursday 7th March in the Life Sciences Lecture Theatre at the University of Tasmania. The President's talk will be at 7:15pm, followed by the AGM, then a General Meeting.

Nominations are called for the following office bearers:-

President	Bulletin Editor
Vice President	Walks and Talks Coordinator
Secretary	Librarian
Treasurer	Naturalist Editor
	Three (3) Committee Members

Nominations should reach the Secretary at the above address by Monday 20 February, or be delivered in person immediately prior to the start of the AGM. A nomination form is attached below, but any written nominations will be accepted provided they contain the same information as contained in the official nomination form.

Nominations can also be emailed to secretary@tasfieldnats.org.au and the agreement of the nominee will be confirmed prior to the AGM.

Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club

Nomination for _____ (position) Name:_____	Nominated by:_____ Seconded by ¹ :_____ Accepted ² :_____
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1. If this is left blank the Secretary will seek a seconder from the club membership.
2. Signature of the person being nominated. If this is left blank, the person will be asked at the AGM if they accept nomination.